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LIBRARY SCIENCE
LIBRARY

THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE A.A.L.

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NUMBER 1

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Official Journal of the Association of Assistant Librarians

(Section of the Library Association)

EDITOR: W. G. SMITH

Westminster Public Libraries, Buckingham Palace Road, London, S.W.1.

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JANUARY, 1958

The President's Message

WE HAVE A PLEASANT tradition of pretence that at Midnight on 31st December a curtain falls on a year's activities and rises at once to reveal a new series of scenes in a year of changed circumstances. Yet we all know that history is not a series of unconnected events. There is continual progression and time has no curtain, it rolls along like the waves on the sea shore, each one overspilling another. Changes there will be, however. Ideas only planned or barely initiated in the past will come to fruition and others will be conceived that in time will influence those who follow us.

1958 will probably bring rather more than its fair share of upheavals in the public lives of librarians. In their New Year Messages my predecessors in office have mentioned the developments that have been under consideration in the examination syllabus and in the branch and sectional organisation of our parent body, the Library Association, and it is very likely that these will bear fruit very soon. The Government has recently launched its plans for the reform of local government areas, powers and finance which will affect every librarian in his capacity as citizen, and will have even greater repercussions on those who are local authority employees. The latter also eagerly await the pronouncements of the Roberts Committee with the hope that it will seize this opportunity to make the bold recommendations necessary to straighten out the tangled chaos of the public library system, and produce a fully integrated pattern that is truly national in its scope and in its service.

These matters will affect each one of you, and it will be my proud duty to lead your Council in its vigilance in these and many other matters on your behalf. Do not forget that we are your elected Council, and are always ready to listen to your opinions and to consider your suggestions through your Divisions, the columns of the *Assistant Librarian*, or by way of your Honorary Officers. I consider it part of my job as President to be at the disposal of anyone who wishes to approach me, and I hope to have the opportunity to meet many of you personally in the Divisions during the year.

The Council is no caucus of time-servers, but is continually invigorated by energetic newcomers taking the place of those who have played their splendid parts and passed on. Those who give their services so freely as Officers or members of the Council and of the Divisional Committees deserve your interest and support, for without it the Association cannot prosper. I appeal to you all to give that aid by offering your own services to Committees, by attending and speaking at meetings and by supporting Divisional activities. Do not be afraid that the Association is run by "big names" from big systems. It is perhaps significant that I am the first President for many years to work in a small-medium sized

library system, most of the officers are from similar services and both the Honorary Secretary and the Honorary Treasurer for 1958 are products of Sussex—one of our smallest Divisions, yet lively as the best.

Last year we had a memorable conference at Winchester, and I believe that the one in Liverpool will be equally successful. Its theme is the impact of libraries on society. My own long held belief is that our biggest impact as librarians can only be made if we all have a strong bond of professional solidarity, and are imbued with a strong sense of service to the community in general and our own readers in particular. One of the main purposes of our Association is the education, in the widest sense, of the younger librarian to that end. May we all be filled with just a little more of that responsibility in 1958. I am sure that we shall then feel it will be a happy New Year and ultimately a prosperous one too.

Thank you for the honour you have conferred on me this year. My ambition is to deserve it, my resolve to try. Best wishes to you all.

O. S. TOMLINSON, *Finchley Public Libraries.*

Election of A.A.L. National Councillors for 1958

GENERAL CATEGORY.		CANDIDATES UNDER 30 YEARS OLD.	
Elected.	No. of Votes	Elected.	No. of Votes
W. Howard Phillips	1356	G. E. Smith	1304
E. F. Ferry	1140	D. E. Davinson	1150
Miss L. E. Green	1083	D. J. Bryant	1123
A. C. Jones	995		
G. Thompson	895	Not Elected.	
Miss G. E. C. Edwards	876	Mrs. M. M. Hevey	1059
Not Elected.		A. W. Ball	942
H. R. Klieneberger	871	W. Davies	757
A. G. S. Enser	842		
P. G. New	716	Voting papers issued	7200
F. Atkinson	705	Voting papers returned	2487
H. Smith	674	Invalid	73
R. M. Lyle	657	Valid papers counted	2414
J. Hoyle	586		
B. H. Baumfield	529		
L. E. Taylor	406		
S. M. Jarvis	390		

(Signed) O. S. TOMLINSON (*Presiding Officer*), W. G. SMITH, R. J. ENSING, K. THIMBLEBY, S. I. DAVIS, M. WHITTON, M. J. BLAKE, N. SUTHERS, R. SURRIDGE.

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What **does** a Chief Librarian do ?

F. A. Sharr

What's wrong with librarianship? "Simply this," says Mr. Braine, "not enough librarians read. Too many librarians in high places are administrators first and bookmen a long way after."

—*Liaison*, April 1957.

This, of course, has often been said before; indeed the subject is almost trite. But I do not recall any recent statement of the other point of view. As I have been faced with this choice as a practical and personal problem for the last ten years and have reached the opposite conclusion perhaps I may put the administrator's point of view.

The basic skill of a librarian is to help a reader find the book or the information which he needs, just as the basic skill of a doctor is to help a patient get and keep well. The doctor must know medicine and understand people. The librarian must know books and bibliography and understand people. The two professions are really very similar, except in financial rewards.

But the job of anyone at the head of a library is quite different. His first and overwhelmingly most important responsibility is to get money. If he fails in that, his library cannot prosper, his colleagues will be frustrated by lack of books and equipment, they may be badly paid, the place will be unkempt and have an air of lassitude. They will become dispirited, lose confidence in themselves and their work and the public will quickly sense a feeling of failure. Failure breeds failure. Once a library has started to go down hill it becomes progressively more difficult to get the money to put things right, or to persuade the staff to make the extra effort to do so.

No! His job is not to be a librarian, but to run a library. If he does not do his job properly, his colleagues who are the real librarians cannot do theirs.

This is true regardless of the size of the library. In a very small library the head may have to select books, do the cataloguing, issue books and advise readers, but this means that he is doing two separate jobs, one administration and the other librarianship. In a small show people have to double jobs, but it is important to realise that they are doubling different jobs.

As the size of the library grows, the work, both professional and administrative increases, more staff are appointed, and the responsibilities of each becomes more specialized. Separate functions are allocated to separate people: Accessions Librarian, Chief Cataloguer, Lending Librarian, Reference Librarian—and Administrator.

Administration is the direction of an organised enterprise so that it fulfils the purpose for which it exists. There must be direction in any group activity, therefore there must be a director. The larger the organisation the more time direction takes up, until, when it reaches a certain size, administration becomes a full time job—just as cataloguing or lending service do. Unfortunately some who rise in the hierarchy do not realise this and try to continue doing both librarianship and administration, with the result that they do neither well.

The only person who can direct the whole show is the titular head. Therefore when the size of the organisation reaches the point where direction has become a full time job, the head must become a full time administrator—and thereby cease to be a practising librarian.

This applies not only in librarianship but in every other field. The County Architect cannot spend his time at a drawing board, the Director of Education in teaching, the Medical Officer of Health in getting people well. It is generally desirable that the head of a professional organisation should be professionally qualified and experienced; not because he normally exercises his professional skills, but because one of the greatest difficulties in administration is the problem of communication. If the top man can "talk the same language" as his staff, communication is easier. They will be happier and work better if they know that he shares their ideals, hopes and fears, can understand their problems and difficulties, and appreciate their successes.

The man at the top has three functions, none closely connected with books: getting money, getting results, and making sure that the people who control the purse strings know that the library is worth while and worth spending more money on. The one absolutely essential function is to get money and to go on getting it.

Persuading people to give you money is largely a matter of creating confidence in yourself and your library, convincing them that your plans are sound and that you will carry them out if they give you the money, that you can and will, in fact, deliver the goods. For that, to be known as a bookish type is not much help—it may be a hindrance; to be regarded as a competent administrator is definitely a help.

Having obtained some money, the next task is to ensure that it is spent to the best advantage. Librarianship is a personal service basically. Therefore the library must have good staff; only good librarians can give good service, only good service will get results, only good results will earn more money. Therefore the Chief must plot and scheme and sometimes fight to get them good salaries. Then he can fairly expect them to work hard.

Most people will work hard and happily if they know what they are supposed to do, they agree with it, they have the necessary books and equipment and are given the credit for their successes. Those "ifs" sound

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simple enough but in practice they involve hours of planning, discussing, persuading, encouraging, guiding and soothing the inevitable minor frictions—just talking to people in fact.

Of course the library must have good books, but a good staff will select a good stock, if they are given the money to do it, and a clear general policy line. With a good staff, working happily, and good book-stock, the library will “get results”—the second function of the Chief, upon which the supply of money depends. Note, it is the staff who get the results; the Chief’s job is to enable them to do so. They work with books, he works with people. (This is, of course, a simplification, it omits the vital function of assessing social aims and needs, i.e., deciding what results are worth getting and then “directing” the organisation to those ends by means of a clear and understood policy.)

To ensure that the supply of money is maintained and increased, it is essential that those in financial authority know that the library is a success. The third function of the Chief is therefore that of sales manager. And this he must do himself. It is no good having a wonderful library if people do not know it and use it. This involves all types of public relations, all very time consuming and often of off duty time, too. Public relations means, normally, not talking about books, but talking and writing about the library’s aims, policy and above all, service and achievements.

Perhaps I may illustrate the foregoing by jotting down my major activities this week.

Monday.

A.M. Met visiting librarian and showed him round.

P.M. Conference with professional staff of reference library on renovation of the building, to be done next year.

EVENING Went through a pile of professional periodicals.

Tuesday.

A.M. Wrote first draft of report on a new project to cost about £100,000 over 10 years. Interviewed journalist who is doing a feature article on the service.

P.M. Wrote an article for a teachers’ magazine on Bibliographies as a tool of learning.

EVENING Spoke to meeting of Institute of Sales Management.

Wednesday.

A.M. Conference with architect on renovations.

P.M. Conference with senior staff to discuss report written on Tuesday. Found they all disagreed with my proposals. Wasn’t convinced by them. Discussion with Accountant on next year’s estimates.

EVENING Took report home and rewrote it in the light of staff views.

Thursday.

A.M. Finished discussion on estimates. Further conference on second report. The senior staff still disagreed, but I began to see their point of view.

P.M. Conference with Government Printer on legal deposit of official publications. Drafted a statement of the staff’s views and my views on the report. Asked them if it was a fair statement.

EVENING Took report home. Pondered. Decided their approach was better than mine. Started all over again on new policy line. Finished 1.30 a.m.

Friday.

A.M. Told senior staff I accepted their views and gave them new

policy. Asked them to work out full cost and staffing implications. Inspected a lift in another department which the architect thinks we could use as a book lift. Rotary lunch. Casual but useful talk with the Under Treasurer. Accepted invitation to talk to the Society of Accountants.

P.M. Visit to dentist. Final conference with senior staff. Accepted their cost and staffing proposals. Complete agreement. Discussion with Chairman on the policy report to make sure he completely understands it.

EVENING Wrote this!

That is not an exceptional week's time table although, of course, the details vary.

If the library has a good clear policy, good staff, good bookstock and good public relations, those who control the purse strings will quickly find out that it is doing a good job. Then it will get its money next year. Success breeds success. Everyone will back a winner.

There are a few exceptional men and women who can hold down a top administrative post, with all the evening work which it entails, and yet find time to read widely and deeply. But they are very few and very brilliant. By the time that the average administrator has kept the outside engagements which his job requires, read the current professional literature, and enjoyed a little time with his family or in recreation, there is very little time left for reading. This is regrettable but it is a fact.

The acid test of a Chief is not his knowledge of books but the size of his budget and the reputation his library enjoys in its community.

* * *

Mr. Sharr is a Past-President of the A.A.L. who now has the enviable task of building up a library service in Western Australia. He has been joined by several other librarians from this country, to all of whom we send our very best wishes.

* * *

The Yorkshire Division of the A.A.L. has now contributed £18 18s. to the John Rylands Library appeal.

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Pusillanimous Quibbling

It is distressing that Mr. Frank Atkinson should have seen fit to fly into the faces of his examiners as he did in the November issue of *The Assistant Librarian*. His article was entirely of a destructive nature, and seemed to be an effort to remove every last vestige of authority from the examiners. Small credit to Mr. Atkinson for this attempt; surely he must grant the examiners some measure of integrity, or else he can have derived little pleasure from appearing on the pass list of the examination—for which achievement I offer him hearty congratulations.

The examiners are being most immoderately maligned. Mr. O'Leary is guilty of contriving to turn a complaint about a tutor into an attack on the examiners in the same issue of *The Assistant*. What, surely, is required is a down-to-earth assessment of the case, designed to achieve dignity for, and confidence in, the "examination structure", beginning with the many good points that it already has.

Mr. Atkinson doesn't help at all. The particular set of questions cited seems to be most reasonable. It is pusillanimous quibbling to complain at the qualification of John Tate as "the Younger", and at the same time to bemoan the absence of a qualifying sobriquet for Estienne. I submit that even the question on "Denis Robert" is allowable. It is quite appropriate that slightly ambiguous questions be set; (the public librarian at least should be well practised in handling this sort of question from readers; or perhaps Mr. Atkinson slanders his public for asking questions "ximenesitically"; or perhaps they just don't do that kind of thing in Hampstead). In fact, I am particularly intrigued by this "Denis Robert" affair; it seems to be a jolly fine device for finding the really knowledgeable student—the one who can spontaneously write that "... if Denis Robert claims any significant contribution to the development of paper-making, then he must have been taking lessons in exaggeration from Lawrence of Arabia, whereas Nicolas-Louis ... in 1798 ..."

The presence of such ambiguities most certainly does not prove lack of knowledge on the part of examiners. So far as question papers are concerned it is impertinent of the student to complain unless a question is definitely outside the syllabus.

What we must insist upon is that the scripts are *marked* consistently and with erudition. We should be able to feel sure that a certain standard of answers will ensure a pass. We should be able to feel confident that erroneous statements in answer papers are spotted and marked down without exception, and that valid statements are credited to the candidate.

There does not appear to be any reason to suspect that these requirements are not being fulfilled. Question papers have nothing to do with it. However, the blight that Mr. Atkinson's analytical eye claims to have discovered has evidently become real for many students, and mere words from the examiners are not likely to cure it. It is up to the examiners now to demonstrate that this angry complaint against them is just an auto-suggested headache.

Having failed L.A. exams like everyone else, I am resolved to regard the examiners as competent until they are proved otherwise. It is important to get this unsavoury affair cleared up. Perhaps that could be most speedily effected if a selection of borderline examination papers was published, with the examiners' markings. It might not be a pretty sight, but would at least be good for a few pages of lively correspondence in your cannibal-pot, and looked-forward-to, journal.

IVOR KEMP, *Chief Asst., Bridgwater Public Library.*

Frank Atkinson replies:

Mr. Kemp's letter appears to be, as was once said of George Moore's face, "a mask through which nothing can clearly be seen".

Some measure of common ground is necessary before discussion can take place and I can see no common ground with a colleague who describes the copying by examiners of a misprint as a slight ambiguity and a "jolly fine

device"; who cannot understand that the John Tate-Robert Estienne questions constitute a flagrant inconsistency; who welcomes examiners' howlers, yet expects "consistency and erudition" in the marking of scripts; and who thinks it impertinent to criticize examination papers.

We may not be moved to pity by the performance of a somewhat bewildered poodle which, confused by even the simplest demonstration, rolls on the mat to propitiate its master—but we should forbear to kick its bottom.

Querying the Tutors

Two November correspondents commented on our Examination Supplement regarding perfect binding and the type faces used by the Golden Cockerell Press. Our tutor replies:—

(1) To Mr. O'Leary. Mr. O'Leary himself provides the "riposte" in his own statement—"there is, of course, good and bad perfect binding, and I imagine the writer to be acquainted only with the latter". The majority of library assistants are lacking Mr. O'Leary's good fortune in possessing his own bindery, and their experience is therefore limited to the service provided by commercial firms, many of whom do, in fact, frown upon the re-binding by the "perfect" method of books issued by publishers in this form. Of course, such books can be re-bound (if the inner margin allows it) but facilities for this are not generally available to all libraries. I trust that Mr. O'Leary's rather ill-tempered statement that "in most respects, he is wrong" will be taken for what it is worth—he obviously refers only to the last sentence of a two paragraph note.

(2) To Mr. Cave. As the question called primarily for the present position and as an alternative second part, stressed "since 1945", I did not consider that a type face cut in 1929 had any relevance within this context.

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STATUS

by R. E. Marston
*Branch Librarian
Hammersmith Libraries*

Standing: condition: relative position in society: Thus "Nuttall's" defines the subject of this article. A subject which would seem, judging from the contributions to our Press, to be of perennial interest. Is this a healthy sign? It has been said that those most zealous of their rights and position often have the least claim to them. Thus our petulant cries when one of our number has to stoke the boiler, or lock the gate at night, may strike colleagues as a heroic stand for principle, but must seem to the public both unaccommodating and ludicrous. Such actions, though well intentioned, do not enhance our prestige, but rather bring local notoriety of an unsavoury nature.

Professional status demands that an occupation should embrace a body of specialised knowledge, an ideal of service, and an ethical code related to the best interests of the calling and the community. Recognition of that status by the public is of course dependent on the value of the service provided. The more apparent the value, the readier the recognition, e.g., the doctor by his practice can hold balance between life and death, therefore his status is high. Other professions have importance little lower than that of medicine, yet because their service is less tangible the community does not so easily afford them accolades, e.g., Teaching: Education is regarded by many (including governments), as a pleasant luxury, but something that can be cut if times are hard. Nevertheless without it man would sink back into superstition and anarchy. It follows that teachers have had a hard fight for their professional level and even now the standard of remuneration and social position accorded them is considerably lower than that of doctors.

What of the aspirants, those occupations still striving for public affirmation of their professional role? It would seem that nearly all are in the queue, if one bears in mind the above mentioned criteria. Certainly the Grocers' Institute sets examinations with the worthy intention of building up a body of men with knowledge of the various cuts of bacon, the fluctuating price of tea, and the relative merits of detergents. The rat catchers have of recent years become Rodent Controllers, and the Sanitary Inspectors have felt that this title denotes an over-simplification of their function, and thus become Public Health Inspectors. The salesman can take courses in his vocation resulting in letters guaranteeing his competency and admitting him to full membership of an association which takes care of the ethics, etc. Where does this lead us? To the fact that any ambitious section of workers coveting professional prestige can overlay their basic function with superfluous knowledge, play on the ideal of service, formulate an appropriate code of ethics, and where necessary subscribe to a more dignified form of name. The gardening completed, the harvest should be rich, but employers are not so easily deceived, for unless the bacon is professionally better, rodent control superior to rat catching, professional selling more effective than the previous variety, all the padding in the world will not produce those attractive goals of higher wages and prestige.

And so to librarianship. It would be comforting to say that we have had a hard fight, as our virtues are not easily displayed, but now rest on our laurels in company with the teachers among professions of the second division. But do we? The salary to which the average librarian rises is considerably lower than the ceiling of the average teacher, in spite of

recommendations for parity in the "Kenyon Report," etc. Social position is not so easily measured, but let's face it, with the majority of people it has a direct relationship to cash, and one has only to work in libraries for a short time to note the drain of bright young people to the Teachers' Training Colleges. No, our status is below the teachers, and in the public eye we are no doubt classed with the aspirants, those who have weaved a web of specialised knowledge remotely connected with their occupation, possessors of outlandish letters, but not distinguished for their contribution to society. We know our value, and are indignant at such a judgment, but this is our employers' assessment of us, as a glance at the back page of the T.L.S. will prove.

Where is the remedy? To my mind we must get back to essentials, concentrate on those things we believe distinguish us as a profession, and practice them to the end that the public recognise our contribution. If this is achieved our status will rise and the slights to our dignity disappear, both real and imagined. What are the essentials of librarianship? I would go for A. C. Jones' view that book selection and advisory work are our professional tasks. Competent classification and cataloguing are essential to the efficient library as a finding system, just as a good filing procedure is to any commercial office, but these are techniques and not professional hallmarks. They do not differentiate the librarian from a thousand other workers in diverse trades, all absorbed with the problem of arranging and recording material for easy access. Administration likewise is necessary in all enterprises, but the architect does not look to it for his professional identification, why should the librarian? Our claim to recognition must rest with our bookmanship. By the quality of our bookstocks and their exploitation to the benefit of the public we must seek to impress our value on the community. Stock revision is still a task for the idle hour that never comes; advice whether personal, by display, or printed list, rarely receives the priority to which we give lip service. However, these are the elements which can give us the standing we desire, if we neglect them we have only ourselves to blame.

Obviously a change of approach in individual libraries is not enough. Greater accent needs placing on bibliography, book selection, and reference work in the examination room, with a corresponding reduction in the fantastic proportions of classification and cataloguing, and an end to the attempt to produce the librarian cum printer, architect, and heating engineer. The present proposed syllabus would seem a step in the right direction.

What of graduate recruitment? A degree adds weight to any professional qualification, and thorough subject knowledge cannot be gained as a basis for book selection and advice. There are reservations, however: Present salaries are not likely to attract many of the ablest from the universities as entrants, we must therefore view academic distinction in relation to personality, if our recruitment is to reflect our ambitions as a profession. This is equally applicable in selecting school leavers, but it is at the graduate level that educational attainment tends to overshadow other considerations.

So much for the body of professional knowledge, the ideal of service, and recruitment. What of the code of professional ethics? This requires on the part of members a high regard for their calling and abstinence from action that will injure its integrity or that of fellow members in their professional capacity. If we fail in this respect we shall nullify much that we achieve day by day in our libraries. It is not enough to act professionally, but also to behave professionally. Thus the applica-

tions for black-listed jobs, the gossip columns outside the professional journals, the eccentric dress and demeanour at work and professional functions, all militate against our claims being taken seriously by those who matter. There are answers to this I know, "the wife and kids," for the blacklisted job, "fresh air from outside," for the gossip column, and "expressing personality" for dress and demeanour. Surely though it is a case for weighing things up, blacklisted jobs filled mean depression of standards in the long run both for successful candidates and their colleagues, despite any temporary advantages. The gossip column may deflate some prig, but there are advantages in keeping it in the family, and as regards dress, surely there is enough time, outside the places where it may be misconstrued, to indulge one's idiosyncrasies.

In conclusion, will it work? Accent on bookmanship, service to the public, thoughtful recruitment, and a tighter code of behaviour, is it enough to carry us up? My father relates that forty years ago when he wanted a tooth out, it was an old deal chair in the chemist cum dentist's, the "professional operation" performed in something under the time it took to sell a wart cure. Now look where the dentists are. They have convinced the public of the importance of their teeth,—haven't we a somewhat easier task in convincing them of the importance of their minds?

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The Bedside Manner

S. M. APTED, Coventry City Libraries.

Is there a librarian in the hospital? If the St. John Ambulance Brigade has any say in the matter there will be a good supply of people who have some knowledge of hospital librarianship.

During the last five years several of the Coventry City Libraries staff have conducted courses for the St. John Cadets' Proficiency Certificate in librarianship, or have examined cadets in the subject. The cadets vary in age from 12 to 18 years. From a chartered librarian's point of view the work is elementary, but it is tackled with great enthusiasm by the cadets.

An outline of the syllabus prescribed for the course is as follows:—

1. The cadet must have read as wide a selection of books as possible, be able to classify them, and to outline the substance of each. The name of as many authors as possible must be learned, and the type of book they have written.

2. The cadet must know how to prepare a book for the library, including cataloguing, processing, repairs, discards, also how to issue a book to a patient, and how to arrange the trolley attractively for use in the wards.

3. Hospital discipline and etiquette as they affect the hospital librarian must be understood.

The minimum length of time prescribed for the course is twelve hours, which we split up into six classes. The subject has to be treated as practically as possible, and at least one visit must be made to a public or hospital library before the examination.

We start the course with a general survey of the work to be done. "We want you to read as much as you can, so that you will be able to help your patients to choose books. The St. John syllabus says you must have read at least twelve books, of which four must be classic fiction, and two others non-fiction. We shall show you how a library works, and tell you something of librarianship in hospital libraries."

The first section of the course covers classification, very broadly adapted to meet the needs of young people. "Please, why do you put numbers on the books?" When this question comes, we explain that the numbers are a means of finding books in the library, and of putting them in places where they can be found. A brief explanation of the first ten places of Dewey follows. Questions round the group make them assemble their scanty book knowledge, and provide examples of books to fit the various classes. (Most persistent efforts are required from the instructor to encourage the class to enlarge their book knowledge). We try to make sure that the cadets know how to use the catalogue and find books on subjects which interest them.

Sometimes there is a discussion as to what is fiction and what isn't. "Please, is *Twelfth Night* fiction?" The St. John syllabus favours classified fiction, so we talk about the various types of novel. Very few of the cadets know anything of writers of fiction for adults, other than the classics they have read at school. The well-known writers of light romances, westerns, and thrillers, hardly exist for them. Most cadets have a good knowledge of children's books, which they have seen at school or in the children's library, and will readily describe the story of *Jane Eyre*, *Silas Marner*, or *Treasure Island*. Several can talk about the "book-of-the-film," such as *The Wooden Horse*.

For cataloguing, we give the rudimentary rules, and let the class

practise on cards. The handwriting is usually inelegant, and as the syllabus says the cadets must be proficient in neat lettering, this matter has to be attended to. Practical work, like preparing and issuing books, is liked best by the cadets.

Near the end of the course, small groups of cadets are allowed to watch at the enquiry desk in the library, and accompany staff who are looking for books in answer to readers' enquiries. The cadets soon ask questions themselves. "I didn't know you could get books on shorthand from the library."

"Have you got a book about the Scarlet Pimpernel and the French Revolution, history I mean?"

"I've read all the books on railways you've got on the shelves; are there any more?"

Where possible we refer the cadets to their notes from the classes, or to the catalogue, and they usually find the information they want.

Very elementary instruction in reference material is given. The main works we show them are *Whitaker's Almanac*, *Chambers' Encyclopaedia*, *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, the *Oxford Atlas*, the local telephone directory, and the electoral roll.

At every class we mention as many books by author and title as possible, and send the cadets round the library to make their own lists of books they like. Some become so keen that we find them in the library on Saturdays, working on their own.

The examination is in three sections, written, practical, and oral. The pass mark is 50 per cent. for those under 16, and 65 per cent. for those over 16. Anyone who gains 80 per cent. is awarded a distinction.

The great variety of work to be done in a library always surprises the cadets. If nothing else is accomplished by these courses, at least the ninety-five cadets who have attended know how to use a public library, and understand what sort of book and information they may expect to obtain there.

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You can see the point

S. M. JARVIS, Aldershot Public Library

You can see the point of a pyramid—and nobody questions what keeps it up there—it's that long outspreading mass in between the top and the bottom. But there is an interesting fact about the pyramids that is not generally known; the sides were all protected from the heat of the sun and the cold night temperatures by a layer of extra tough specially quarried granite. Now the mighty men of later years have seen this outer skin as a source of ready-made building material for their own palaces. The palaces, however, have been wrecked by succeeding conquerors while the solid pyramids have remained. But because they have lost this tough outer skin the pyramids will soon be dust—eroded by wind, sand and temperature.

Sad, but this is happening every day in Britain—in the pyramidal organisation of countless library staffs. Not necessarily in the same way—for tunnelling inside sometimes brings down chief, deputy and all to dusty ruins. A staff pyramid depends on everybody on that staff knowing his or her place, taking all the burden that this position demands and respecting the positions and burdens of other members of the unit.

Let's look at the pyramid. On top sits the chief, and we're all down there holding him up. But without a point the shape would not be a pyramid. The chief makes it so. He bears none of the physical weight, but think how in his lofty position he is exposed to all the winds of criticism that blow. From all sides the icy blasts may suddenly arise—from committees, councils—cabbages and kings! Yet the point of the pyramid must stay put, shouldering the storms—and the librarian faces the elements, makes decisions, and justifies his staff's existence in awful solitude.

Beneath the chief his deputy, his chief assistant and his seniors are developing the mass of the pyramid, broadening its sides and filling it solidly and thoroughly with good masonry. They interlock the apex with the base. They are in the enviable position of being shown both sides of every problem and unenviably have to attempt arbitration, mediation and reconciliation. They are most subject to the internal strains of the pyramid. They may have to interpret policy with which they disagree, but out of respect and loyalty they have to press this policy through—even if other members of the staff also disagree.

Their position is not so lofty but they command respect because of their proximity to the chief—because from them the broad sides flow down with specialists like reference and children's librarians, cataloguers and so on, forming perhaps the ridges or the corner stones—a little more prominent and a little more public—open to more criticism of their own particular branches of the service. Even at this stage in the pyramid the amount of responsibility may be greater than the output of physical work required.

And at the bottom—not only the pyramid, but perhaps, visions of the slaves still toiling! Really the juniors' position is not as bad as all that. The tough skin of the pyramid is made up of the seniors' responsibility. A planned programme of work, a comprehensive staff manual make life easier for the junior. Relieved of all but personal responsibility in the execution of their daily work, they put in the solid contribution to the inside of the pyramid—they give the shape and satisfaction to the service. Anyone can touch the bottom of a pyramid and they may well wonder how it withstands the pressure from above. So the public see the junior assistant first and from the response they get they judge the quality of the whole service.

Now if the library pyramid lost its outer casing of control, responsibility and supervision, by the chief and seniors, respect would be the first layer to be eroded.

Gradual breakdown of the service must follow—until the lack of respect for seniors and the chief has spread to lack of respect also for the public.

Without co-operation new ideas cannot be promoted, and the service becomes perfunctory.

So the library stands, deserted, dull and depressing—a dusty relic of what was once an object of public pride.

Don't let it happen!

Talking Points

A deputy, a chief assistant, and three reference librarians from large systems were among the applicants for a teaching post recently at the Loughborough School of Librarianship. Whilst important, this post does not exceed, even if it equals, the responsibilities of the posts held by the applicants. It is indicative of the poor comparative rewards of librarianship that such men should be attracted from their posts.

We enjoyed a satirical review in the August issue of the *Journal of Chemical Education* of an American book *Documentation in Action* by Shero and Perry (Reinhold, \$10, 1956). The science of documentation, it says, is a vehicle "propelled by thrusts generated by hot air derived from verbiage not necessarily based on correct information. . . . Upon boarding the galactic conveyance and before admission to the company of the select we are to pass through a purgatory where we are to be cleansed of such archaic impediments as grammar, syntax, etymology, etc., and then instructed in 'language engineering'." The reviewer agrees that we should work for the best possible solution of the problems of documentation but does not believe "that they will stem from 'language engineering', 'conceptualization' or 'semantic factoring'."

We are indebted to Mr. L. L. Ardern of the Manchester College of Science and Technology for drawing our attention to this. Perhaps if the same reviewer had a look at some of our classification writings, he would bring them back to earth, too.

Suggestion for library suppliers: offer to supply your books complete with B.N.B. catalogue cards. To have the book and catalogue card together would be a considerable advantage to many libraries and the cards might be available at a cheap rate if bought in large numbers.

Strange doings at Newark where the libraries committee put up a proposal for a mobile library to service outlying parts of the town at an estimated annual cost of only £400, *including staff*. It emerged in the debate that one of the present members of the staff would both drive and act as librarian. This led one member of the Council to ask, reasonably enough, what that person was doing already.

From the local newspaper's report of the Council's debate, it would appear that this is not a sincere attempt to provide a good service but a panic attempt to put up the façade of a service in the hope of preventing any take-over by the County.

INVOICE MANIA

A.A.L. Divisions who are enterprising enough to produce publications find that the administrative work of selling them is greatly increased by a cumbersome system of invoices required by government departments and other authorities. For a single copy of a 5s. publication we were once asked by the Crown Agent for the Colonies to supply eight copies of the invoice; London County Council wanted a delivery note to one address, invoices to another, and then a monthly statement. However, publications officers may take heart; there is no reason to tolerate this sort of thing. Our technique whenever more than one invoice is demanded is to return the order endorsed "This publication sold only for cash in advance". It worked every time. The only protest came recently from an indignant official of the London County Council who seemed under the impression that his authority was rather more important than the monarchy and should be beyond criticism. It is the sort of attitude that so frequently and rightly annoys the public in dealing with local government officers and we should take every opportunity to deflate such pomposity.

(Editorial).

PRINCIPLES AND PUBLIC SPEAKING

Council Notes—14 November

Confirmed anew was the old committee adage that it is the agenda of apparent innocuousness which has to be watched. There were only ten items on Council's agenda, many of them seemingly routine—yet this was the meeting which ruined the President's record of early finishes. Perhaps it was because so many issues were argued "in principle", a notorious method of stirring up extraneous emotions and consuming time. Mr. Carver even managed to quote Gypsy Rose Lee, whose autobiography he recommended, as saying, "it's the money that counts, not the principle".

The most interesting item of the afternoon was a consideration of the ways in which the A.A.L. might encourage a higher standard of public speaking among its members. A memorandum by the President stated clearly and concisely the present failings of the profession in this direction, and put forward some useful suggestions for a divisional or national speaking competition. In the long debate which ensued it was obvious that there was general support for the President's ideas, strong and vehement opposition coming only from Mr. Thompson who didn't want more and more people trained to speak rubbish ably. So ably did Mr. Thompson speak that he was in danger of illustrating his point. Pride of place in this debate, however, must go to Mr. Carver, having a field day on his last attendance at Council in 21 years. He countered Mr. Thompson with the assertion that the main requirement for good public speaking is belief in your subject, though "there are a few people," admitted Mr. Carver, "who can speak persuasively about something they don't believe in—they are mostly to be found in the church." Mr. Phillips, admitting to being horrified after recently hearing his voice on a tape-recorder, apologised to Council members for the numerous occasions on which he had inflicted that voice upon them. After a half-dozen motions and amendments it was left to the officers to bring forward to the next meeting detailed recommendations for a national speaking competition.

Although they appeared to consist largely of routine items, the President had difficulty in steering Council past the first two items, the customary "matters arising" and "correspondence". Main cause of delay was another local war between Messrs. Thompson and Phillips over the Teacher/Librarian Certificate, which the latter described as "a farce" and the former as a major advance. Congratulations were offered to Mr. Thompson for his interesting paper at the A.A.L. Session at Harrogate (the subject, strangely enough, "The Teacher-Librarian"), and to the President, who had topped the poll in the L.A. Council election.

The A.A.L. will be represented on the L.A. Council in 1958 by next year's Honorary Secretary and President, Messrs. John Jones and O. S. Tomlinson. W. G. Smith, Jim Davey and A. C. Jones will continue to represent us on the Publications, Education and Conference Committees respectively, and the present Honorary Secretary replaces Mr. Surridge as representative on the L.A. Membership Committee only because Mr. Surridge expects to relinquish his office as Assistant Secretary mid-way through 1958.

The Press and Publications Committee report was received with equanimity, although Mr. Dearden asked that when Binns' *Historical Bibliography* is revised, particular attention should be paid to the errors "which make it such a dangerous tool for students at the moment". The Vice-President congratulated the Publications Officer and all concerned on the production of Clough's *Bookbinding for Librarians*, which he described as a "magnificent publication". It is to be sent for inclusion in next year's N.B.L. exhibition of best-produced books. Mr. Carver pleaded for another title for the forthcoming *Primer of Non-Book Materials*, and suggested offering a prize for the best proposal. No prize-worthy suggestion was made.

The debate on the Education Committee's report brought forth awful revelations on one Deputy Librarian filling in football pools and another in a state of coma during the committee's proceedings. A long argument resulted from the proposal to appoint as a correspondence course tutor in

historical bibliography a member not possessing the magic letters F.L.A. In an emergency the committee felt justified, particularly in view of the merit in historical bibliography held by the candidate. Mr. Pocklington supported this view, and as a student said that he would be happy with a dustman for tutor, providing he was also a "tip-top historical bibliographer". A long-standing principle was defeated, despite its defence by all the big guns of the establishment and the usual opposition—what Mr. Ferry called "an extraordinary alliance".

Before passing to a curious motion from the Yorkshire Division the President referred to the sad death a week before the Council meeting of Mr. B. Oliph Smith, County Librarian of the West Riding. Mr. Flint informed us that he had attended the funeral on behalf of the Yorkshire Division, and the Council stood in silence for a few moments to pay its respects to a librarian who had been a prominent figure in the profession for many years.

Yorkshire's motion seemed to indicate a desire to hawk the office of Vice-President (and hence the Presidency) around the Divisions on a rota basis, in order to achieve even distribution and give encouragement to all the hard and willing workers in the Divisions who are not necessarily too well known to the Council. Arguments were advanced pro and con, but most members were in agreement with the Honorary Editor's contention that the President is the main working officer of the Council and the Association and its representative on the L.A. Council, and should be appointed with these factors in mind. Yorkshire did not receive support from the other divisions, and the motion was heavily defeated.

The Honorary Secretary reported on a meeting with representatives of other sections to discuss progress and present views on Branch and Section Reorganisation. Reasonable harmony exists between the sections on this score, but it emerged that the meeting had resulted in a discussion of wider issues, and that all sections had agreed to consider as a matter of urgency the future reorganisation of the headquarters and executive of the Library Association. Between November and January all Divisions have been asked to give this their fullest consideration so that Council can discuss the matter constructively in the New Year.

Reports on the L.A. Council and committees were less expurgated than of late, *Liaison* for once not having appeared before the A.A.L. Council

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meeting. And so we passed to A.O.B., which at the last meeting of each year is very properly thanksgiving time. Spontaneous and solid applause greeted a sincere vote of thanks by the Vice-President to the President for a notable year of service, as a superb Chairman in Council and an excellent ambassador around the Divisions. The President herself thanked retiring members for their services, and made special mention of Mr. New, ending his spell of slavery as Honorary Publications Officer, and two veterans and Past-Presidents, Messrs. Tynemouth and Carver, whose wisdom and advice the Council will miss as much as their humour.

In handing over Council Notes to my successor, I can only hope that he will enjoy writing them as much as I have during the past three years, and that he will find a formula which will attract more assistants to read them. It is difficult always to do justice to a live and progressive body the size of the A.A.L. Council in two or three pages, but assistants should know that the body which represents them *is* active and constantly in search of ways in which to serve their interests. Not all the facts can be included about any meeting of the Council, and I have often tried to do no more than convey an atmosphere. Fuller information is always available from any of the officers. You have only to ask.

ERIC MOON.

(The Council also expressed its thanks to Eric Moon for three years very hard work as Hon. Secretary, during which he has done much to increase the influence of the A.A.L.—Editor).

From the Stechert-Hafner Book News, April, 1957:—

"We hear that one of the medium-sized (American) public libraries, in an effort to secure library school graduates, placed an advertisement not long ago in the London *Times*. It was stipulated that library training was necessary and that persons employed in the advertising library should be willing to stay in the United States. Amazingly enough, there was a flood of answers. American library salaries, not considered munificent by our standards, evidently helped attract candidates. This, however, is not an answer to combating the current shortage, for drawing librarians from one library to add to another does not increase the number available. And, in this instance, it probably did not help British-American relations."

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